



PO BOX 201706  
Helena, MT 59620-1706  
(406) 444-3064  
FAX (406) 444-3036

## Fire Suppression Interim Committee

### 60th Montana Legislature

#### SENATE MEMBERS

JOHN COBB  
KEN HANSEN  
RICK LAIBLE  
DAVE LEWIS  
GERALD PEASE  
CAROL WILLIAMS

#### HOUSE MEMBERS

STEVE BOLSTAD  
JIM KEANE  
KRAYTON KERNS  
RICK RIPLEY  
CHAS VINCENT  
BILL WILSON

#### COMMITTEE STAFF

LEANNE HEISEL, Lead Staff  
TODD EVERTS, Staff Attorney  
BARBARA SMITH, Fiscal Analyst

TO: Interested Persons  
FROM: Fire Suppression Committee members  
DATE: December 14, 2007  
RE: Request for comment

During the September 2007 special session, the Montana Legislature formed an interim committee called the Fire Suppression Committee (FSC). As members of FSC, we are requesting your assistance and advice.

The legislation that created FSC requires that the committee investigate:

1. firefighting operations in Montana, including operations on tribal land and private land, by the state and federal governments and the management policies affecting the success of those operations;
2. the efficient use of fire suppression resources, including equipment and firefighters;
3. impacts of operations on private land and on the effective use of private resources to fight fires; and
4. state and federal forest management policies and how those policies may contribute to an increased number of wildfires, greater safety risk to firefighters, or compromised effectiveness of fire suppression efforts.

The committee is required to conduct meetings in Miles City, Libby, Thompson Falls, Lewistown, and Hamilton. Members are also planning on conducting smaller hearings in Choteau, Seeley Lake, and possibly other locations as determined by the committee. The committee must complete its study by September 15, 2008 and report its recommendations and findings to the 2009 Legislature.

Here is how you can help:

1. The committee would like specific recommendations on any of the study items listed above as well any other recommendations you may have for fighting fires, suppression of fires or other wildland fire-related issues in Montana.
2. What do you think will happen in this state with regard to firefighting and suppression in the next ten years if no changes in policy, practice, or funding are made?

3. The committee would like to know what can be done by you or others (agencies, local governments, homeowners, private industry) by next spring and early summer to prepare for the fire season.
4. If you provide fire suppression-related contract services during the fire season, please provide us with specific suggestions that may improve the contracting process. *On March 4, 2008, two members of FSC will hold a hearing dedicated to concerns of the contracting community. Check FSC's website for more details as that date approaches.*

We ask that you submit your written comments by **Feb. 1, 2008**. Please feel free to give this document to anyone you think may have ideas relevant to the committee's study.

The committee will review your suggestions and other options developed by staff and will create a list of proposals to consider (whether they conflict with each other or not) before we hold the hearings across Montana. Not every recommendation made will necessarily be included on the list, but there will be a wide variety of recommendations for the public to review before the committee makes any final decisions or requests that any bills be drafted.

You can provide your comments one of three ways:

1. Email them to Leanne Heisel at [lheisel@mt.gov](mailto:lheisel@mt.gov).
2. Write to Fire Suppression Committee, c/o Leanne Heisel; Legislative Services Division; P.O. Box 201706; Helena, Montana 59620-1706.
3. Submit comments on the committee's website at:  
[http://leg.mt.gov/css/committees/interim/2007\\_2008/fire\\_suppression/default.asp](http://leg.mt.gov/css/committees/interim/2007_2008/fire_suppression/default.asp).

Thank you for your participation in this process. We look forward to hearing from you.